



Prostitution Strategy

2008-2011

TVP will work in conjunction with local partner agencies to tackle both on-street and off-street sex markets, and to reduce other crimes and anti-social behaviour arising from either the supply of, or demand for, prostitution.

Thames Valley Police

Prostitution Strategy

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Thames Valley Police

Prostitution Strategy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Strategy sets out the approach adopted by Thames Valley Police (TVP) to tackle prostitution. The current intelligence picture of the sex industry within Thames Valley is patchy. It is known that while a relatively small number of neighbourhoods are affected by street prostitution, where it does occur it is also often associated with drug markets. Furthermore, little intelligence exists on the extent, nature and other crime links of off-street premises used for the purpose of prostitution, or of the extent of human trafficking and child 'grooming' linked to prostitution.

The National Coordinated Prostitution Strategy 2006 and TVPs Force Strategic Objectives guide the aims of this Strategy. To achieve these effectively requires strong partnerships, involving a wide range of enforcement and support agencies. In short, this Strategy commits Thames Valley Police to tackling *both* the supply and demand for prostitution, *both* on- and off-street markets, and to specifically target those who exploit others via human trafficking, prostitution for commercial gain or violence against sex workers. The strategy also highlights the need for prevention and early intervention, especially with children and young people, to stop individuals from becoming involved in prostitution.

The Strategy is supported by Guidance on the Policing of Prostitution. The Guidance contains more detailed information about operational approaches and tactical options which police areas faced with tackling prostitution should consider and choose from.

Thames Valley Police

Prostitution Strategy

1. Introduction

This Strategy sets out the approach adopted by Thames Valley Police (TVP) to tackle all forms of prostitution. The Strategy focuses mainly on level 1 criminality, defined within the National Intelligence Model as crime occurring within Local Police Areas (LPAs) or Basic Command Units (BCUs). This is in recognition of the harm that local prostitution markets can cause to communities and individuals. Organised Criminal Groups (OCGs) involved in level 2 or 3 criminality, for instance, human trafficking or drug dealing, present a unique challenge to the police. The Strategy and guidance therefore does not seek to provide a detailed description of the tactics TVP intends to employ against such groups, (for further information on how TVP tackles level 2 and 3 criminality, see the 'Crime Support Departmental Plan 2007-08').

For the purposes of this Strategy, 'prostitution' is defined broadly in line with that given in Part 1, Section 51 (2) and (3) of the Sexual Offences Act 2003:-

'Prostitution' is the act of offering or providing sexual services to another person in return for payment, or a promise of payment. 'Payment' refers to any financial advantage, including the provision of goods or services, or a discharge of a debt or obligation to pay for goods or services.

This Strategy was developed against a backdrop of increasing anxiety about prostitution in the United Kingdom, driven to some extent by growing concern about human trafficking from new European Union (EU) countries and a high profile, major crime enquiry in late 2006 into the murder of six women who had been working as prostitutes in Ipswich. In addition, as a result of a significant court ruling in favour of a brothel owner in mid-2007, police services have been alerted to inconsistencies in their approach to the off-street prostitution industry.

The current intelligence picture suggests a fragmented geographical spread of the industry within Thames Valley, which may involve a few relatively small 'pockets' of street prostitution. At this time these do not warrant the intensive "vice" control measures adopted in some other parts of the country. Therefore whilst seeking to improve intelligence on both on- and off-street sex markets, the strategy is not intended to be prescriptive about the allocation of resources that ought to be committed to policing prostitution by BCUs or LPAs. Nor does it seek to dictate a standard process to be followed whenever and wherever problems with prostitution arise. Instead, it is supported by a Guidance document which contains information on the operational approaches and tactical options available to our staff and partners. Together, the Strategy and Guidance provides a flexible approach to tackling prostitution in Thames Valley.

2. Background

In January 2006, the Government released 'A Coordinated Prostitution Strategy' which challenged the view that street prostitution was inevitable and proposed a set of shared aims and objectives to guide Government Departments and local partnerships to tackle the problem more effectively.¹ The national strategy highlighted the need to address *both* the supply and demand for prostitution, *both* on- and off-street markets, and to specifically target those who exploit others via human trafficking, prostitution for commercial gain or violence against sex workers. The national strategy also specified the need for prevention and early intervention, especially with children and young people, to stop individuals from becoming involved in prostitution.

In March 2007, TVP completed a Market Profile of Prostitution in Thames Valley. The Market Profile identified 'hotspots' for prostitution as coinciding with areas known for drug use and dealing. Indeed, it has been well documented that *street* sex and drug markets frequently co-exist and to some extent one helps perpetuate the other. It is also known that the majority of street sex workers misuse Class A drugs. Of course, this correlation (of *street* sex and drug markets) could serve to distort the perceived geographical spread of prostitution markets as a whole since police activity will be drawn to the more visible, open markets, particularly if they also involve drug dealing. TVP recognise and will endeavour to fill the intelligence gaps regarding the more closed, off-street, markets.

An up-date of the Market Profile in July 2007 highlighted an increase in the number of intelligence reports relating to prostitution. The reason for the growth in intelligence on prostitution is not clear, although the investment in neighbourhood policing teams and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) working with communities may be having an impact.

In summary, the strategic picture of prostitution in Thames Valley suggests a fragmented landscape involving small pockets of street prostitution in most of the major towns, supplemented by off-street markets of a largely unknown scale. Evidence of links with human trafficking or organised child exploitation is scarce. Links with the regions more open drug markets have been established. Despite the evidence of comparatively compact areas affected by prostitution in Thames Valley, community awareness and media interest in the problem is growing.

¹ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-paying-the-price/ProstitutionStrategy.pdf>

3. Aims of the Strategy

To tackle prostitution effectively requires strong partnerships, involving a wide range of enforcement and support agencies. We will therefore work with our Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) in order to address issues associated with prostitution. Joint strategic assessments and subsequent control strategies and priorities will govern the extent of local focus on prostitution and, to a large degree, govern the nature of local police and partnership action to tackle sex markets, and the causes of those markets.

This Strategy identifies the following aims to guide staff in dealing with prostitution in their local areas. These have been developed in line with identified best practise and the National Strategy on Prostitution.

The aims of this Strategy are:

- **REDUCE SUPPLY:** To maximise opportunities to access appropriate drug treatment services, and other forms of support, by those involved in sex work.
- **TACKLE DEMAND:** Respond to community concerns about prostitution and reduce displacement of markets, whether on- or off-street, by deterring those who create the demand (ie kerb crawlers).
- **REDUCE EXPLOITATION:** To bring to justice those who exploit individuals through prostitution, particularly those involved in human trafficking and child exploitation or 'grooming'.

4. Reducing the supply of prostitution

A key aim of tackling the supply of prostitution is to bring about a partnership managed reduction in sex working in those areas adversely affected by the industry; that causes the least harm to the community by minimising displacement; while maximising the opportunity for sex workers to exit prostitution. To achieve TVP will make use of existing intervention opportunities, legislative tools and support, and treatment programs, such as the Government's Drugs Intervention Program (DIP).

Home Office Circular 109/1959 (Street Offences Act 1959, and amended by the Sexual Offences Act 2003), states that an offender should receive no more than two cautions, referred to as a 'prostitute caution', within a 12 month period before being arrested for the offence of soliciting for the purpose of prostitution. The 'prostitute caution' is not a criminal conviction, nor is it the same as a formal caution. The Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill proposes removing the out-dated term 'common prostitute' from the legislation, while

retaining the need to prove that an individual loiters or solicits 'persistently' before a charge can be made. Persistence is defined as two or more occasions in any three month period. It is likely that the 1959 Circular will be up-dated after the Bill has been approved by parliament.

The powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 to provide Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) and, in more persistent cases, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) have been particularly popular for addressing community concerns and underlying factors like drug use which drive many individuals to undertake sex work. In Thames Valley, police will consult with partners prior to the application of these approaches, and apply multi-agency case management structures in those cases where the legislation has been applied.

The Drugs Act 2005 introduced the option of drug testing for Class A drugs (heroin and cocaine only) under Inspector's Authority for those arrested for prostitution in areas where the Drugs Intervention Program (DIP) 'intensive' measures have been applied. A positive drug test result can lead to a mandatory drug assessment and would be used to inform future sentencing options. Even without a positive drug test result, if the area does not operate drug testing or an Inspector's Authority was not obtained, the DIP can assist individuals to access treatment on a voluntary basis. Upon arrest for prostitution or prostitution-related offences (eg kerb crawling) in intensive DIP areas, offenders in Thames Valley will be considered for drug testing or offered the support of the DIP on a voluntary basis.

The Drugs Act also introduced the option of Intervention Orders (IOs) which can be attached to ASBOs in certain circumstances. Finally, in areas where Conditional Cautioning applies, there will be an opportunity to apply this sanction with a drug rehabilitative condition, and to divert the individual away from the court process and towards assessment and treatment, particularly if drug use is implicated as a cause of the behaviour. TVP, with partner agencies, will seek ways to increase opportunities to use treatment interventions linked to these types of criminal justice disposal.

Most of the legislative options for dealing with prostitution apply to those aged 18 years and over only. Anyone aged under 18 years and believed to be soliciting cannot be given a caution, a conditional caution, a drug test (except in a small number of pilot areas) or an Intervention Order. Arresting young people involved in prostitution may be appropriate in order to allow police to protect the welfare of the young person and apply the statutory framework for Youth offenders within Section 65 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Good practice advice suggests that decisions about intervention should be reached in conjunction with partner agencies. TVP will work closely with partners and communities to ensure that we achieve a co-ordinated and proportionate response. Furthermore, Neighbourhood Policing will increase opportunities for police officers and staff to work with partner agencies and local communities to identify local priorities.

5. Tackling the demand for prostitution

To address street sex markets adequately, strategies need to tackle both the supply and demand for services. The Government, supported by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), is currently advising that police operations to tackle the market for prostitution in identified 'hotspot' areas should also attempt to disrupt and deter those who buy sex. TVP recognises the importance of demand in the prostitution equation and will seek to strike that balance through employing a range of tactics aimed at both sex workers and kerb crawlers, during every prostitution operation.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 provides powers to arrest and charge individuals with kerb crawling offences. As an alternative to prosecution, however, police forces in some parts of England provide kerb crawler education programmes. TVP will assess demand for such a programme in the region, and either initiate a programme or identify opportunities to send offenders to established programmes in neighbouring forces.

Partnerships are as important in tackling those who create the demand for prostitution as they are to reducing supply. Joint education campaigns by police and partners (aimed at, for example, local businesses, transportation networks, further education establishments, licensed premises, and housing associations) will be used where appropriate.

6. Reducing Exploitation

Many individuals benefit financially from the prostitution industry and a few derive personal gratification through the sexual exploitation of children or by regarding prostitutes as easy targets for violent or sexual crime. A key element of the national strategy is to target and remove opportunities for those who use, abuse and exploit individuals through prostitution.

The TVP Strategy reflects the national mood to tackle and prevent those involved in human trafficking (both national and international) and the exploitation of children for the purposes of prostitution. Furthermore, Police in Thames Valley will treat all sexual or other violent crimes committed against sex workers with the seriousness that all such offences warrant.

6.1 Prevention of 'grooming' young people for sex work

Thames Valley Police regard identifying young people who may be at risk of becoming involved in prostitution as a high priority. High risk groups consist of cared for children, or those who have recently left care, young drug misusers, and frequently missing persons. Also, at risk are young people who already associate with older men.

The grooming process may be instigated via on-line communication or personal contact, and may involve persons known to, or previously unknown,

to the young person targeted. The possibility of grooming must always be considered as part of the missing person risk assessment and investigation, particularly in cases of frequently missing young persons from care settings. Regardless of the background to the grooming process, and any apparent willingness to participate on the part of the child, any young person involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in prostitution must be regarded as a victim.

TVP will continue to take an active role within Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs). These are statutory bodies introduced through the Children's Act 2004 to coordinate the efforts of members in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. In support of these TVPs Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU) have developed clear procedures and guidance for officers suspecting, receiving reports, or investigating incidents of child sexual abuse.

6.2 Organised criminals and other financial beneficiaries of prostitution

Key to ensuring the effective disruption of prostitution markets is reducing the opportunities for those who exploit individuals through prostitution for personal financial gain. Where information comes to light in respect of the activities of 'pimps' or brothel owners, Thames Valley officers will ensure it is handled in line with National Intelligence Model (NIM) processes, by identifying intelligence, enforcement and prevention strategies.

To enable the police to target those who coerce, exploit and abuse others through prostitution, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 introduced a number of new offences. The Act introduces the offence of causing, inciting or controlling prostitution for gain, carrying a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment. In Thames Valley, police will pursue in conjunction with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) the criminal prosecution of those involved in the organisation of prostitution (ie. people deriving financial, or other, gain from prostitution eg 'pimps', brothel keepers and so on). In addition to criminal charges, police in Thames Valley will seek to apply Proceeds of Crime legislation (Proceeds of Crime Act 2002) to remove assets and premises from those who financially exploit others through prostitution.

A well-known manifestation of organised people smuggling and the more serious activity of human trafficking is to provide (both willing and unwilling) participants for the purpose of prostitution. Operation Pentameter² was launched across the UK in February 2006 in an attempt to crackdown on human trafficking for the purpose of prostitution. Thames Valley Police intend to play a part in further operations that are scheduled to take place to address this crime.

Human trafficking will remain a priority for TVPs Organised Crime Unit and anyone suspected of having been trafficked, regardless of the circumstances

² <http://www.pentameter.police.uk/>

under which they came to be in the UK, will continue to be treated as a victim rather than an offender. The primary aim of police and partners in any case involving human trafficking must be to attempt to secure appropriate support for the victims and to reduce future trafficking opportunities.

6.3. Addressing violence against sex workers

Offences that are committed against sex workers regularly go unreported and street workers, in particular, are vulnerable to becoming victims of violent or sexual crime. Tackling this aspect of the market, and dealing with the offenders, is an important aspect of a holistic prostitution strategy. Maintaining trust between police and support services for sex workers, and ultimately with the sex workers themselves, is key to generating better reporting and, potentially, preventing the perpetration of more serious crimes.

To help reduce violence against sex workers, TVP officers will follow Government advice to support campaigns such as Crimestoppers 'Ugly Mugs' campaign. In addition, where sex workers have become victims of violence or sexual crime, investigating officers will consider applying special measures for vulnerable or intimidated witnesses.

On occasions, the violence directed at sex workers comes from controlling, or interested parties, rather than from clients, and the sensitivities surrounding these situations should not be underestimated, particularly when the 'pimp' is also the sex worker's partner. Therefore our procedures and guidelines for domestic violence are entirely appropriate under these circumstances and will be followed by all investigating officers in TVP.

7. The public and the Media

Very often, prostitution street markets, or off-street premises used in prostitution, come to police (and media) attention as a result of complaints received from the public. An advantage of police and partners working together is that a uniform message can be given out to reassure the public that action is being taken by a range of agencies in pursuit of a common goal.

Similarly, the media can fuel public interest (and rumour) in relation to the extent and nature of prostitution markets. Their impact should not be underestimated and it should be, to some extent, managed. Again, a multi-agency communications plan that provides an explanation of the aims and rationale of the partnership approach should help reduce the harm created by sensationalist stories and go some way towards reassuring the public about ways in which police and partners are, together, dealing with prostitution.

Key messages that Partnerships tackling prostitution need to promote include the following:-

- Police and partners are working together to target the problem holistically.

- Prostitution markets cannot be tackled effectively without providing essential services to those involved, which tackle the underlying causes of prostitution (eg drug use).
- The partnership will use all of the legislation and tactics available to prevent and deter kerb crawling as well as those offering prostitution, whether in on-street or off-street contexts.
- Violence, trafficking or grooming of individuals for the purpose of prostitution will not be tolerated by any of the agencies involved in the partnership.

8. Links with other Strategies

- The Governments Coordinated Prostitution Strategy 2006
- Up-dated National Drug Strategy 2002 (new strategy due 2008)
- The Thames Valley Police Drugs Strategy 2005-08 (new strategy due 2008)
- The Thames Valley Police Youth Strategy 2007-10
- The Thames Valley Police Community Engagement Strategy, 2007
- Neighbourhood Policing Strategy
- Thames Valley Police Missing Persons Policy
- Local CDRP Strategies
- DAAT treatment and Communities strategies